

**North Berwick Board of Selectmen Minutes June 2, 2020**

**NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES JUNE 2, 2020**

**Present:** Chairman Cowan, Selectman Glemmo, Selectman Hall, Selectman Johnson, Jr., Selectman Johnson, Sr.

**Also Present:** Dwayne Morin, Steve Connolly

Chairman Cowan opened the meeting at 6:34 pm.

- 1. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 2. Review and Approve Minutes of May 19, 2020**

Selectman Glemmo motioned to approve the minutes of May 19, 2020 as written. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

- 3. Public Input**

There was no public input at this time.

- 5. New Business:**

- A. MSAD 60: Meeting with Superintendent on Proposed FY21 Budget**

Steve Connolly stepped forward to discuss the proposed School Budget. He stated that the School Budget hearing itself will be held on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. It has been mandated that they cannot hold it in a public setting. They are working with the legal counsel to determine which of 2 formats they will use. Mr. Connolly stated that they have held off a little bit on their annual report booklet because the information has been changing. There will be 2 parts for the Referendum on July 14<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Connolly stated that one of the things that will be in the Referendum will be the School Revolving Renovation Fund. They put out 4 submissions to the SRRF which is the State Coffer. This is generally designed to hold about \$25 million. You have to have something that is life, health, and safety Priority 1 level to be considered. They haven't had any money in this area for the last 2 years. It was pretty heavily contested this year. They put in 4 submissions and received all 4. There is the Noble Middle School asbestos abatement at a cost of \$308,000, North Berwick Elementary sprinkler system at a cost of \$394,000, Hussey School sprinkler system at a cost of \$530,000 and Hanson Elementary School sprinklers at a cost of \$571,000. The total package for these is \$1.804 million and the State would assume \$1.074 million of this. The District would assume \$730,000 of that cost over a 10 year period with a 0% interest rate for a payment amount of \$73,000 per year.

Mr. Connolly stated that they need to get rid of the asbestos in their buildings so this is why it is part of the renovations. He stated that, as they move forward and the District considers when the appropriate time will be to bring forward a referendum on a major construction project, which will probably be in June of 2021, we need to set our buildings up to alleviate costs in some of the renovation costs. Previously the schools did not require sprinkler systems when they were built, but now they do. The 3 schools previously mentioned need to have sprinkler systems added. The only part that was previously sprinkled was the Hanson kindergarten wing because that was built in 1990 and they had changed the statute. This will be one question that the voters will vote on.

Dwayne stated that this was not showing in the budget so he asked if it would only be next year's budget. Mr. Connolly stated that SRRF can start within a year after the completion date of the project and you have 18 months to complete the project. Mr. Connolly has talked to the State to let them know that 18 months is not going to do us a lot of good because we need a stretch of about 8 weeks to do a sprinkler project so we can't do it while school is in session. It would have to be a summer project. Anne Pinette from the State told him that we would be given permission to go beyond the 18 months to complete. If it takes too long, they would have to show reasons why it is not getting completed in a timely manner. Since the project will not be completed by next year, Mr. Connolly doesn't think that there will be any payments due until probably the 2022 budget.

Mr. Connolly stated that the District has an increase in expenditures of \$530,000 which represents a 1.26% increase. There is a \$1.683 million payoff that is taken care of. This is for Noble High School which will be paid for in full. On the revenue side, they added an additional \$350,000 to the Fund Balance. Also, we had in the 2020 budget \$245,000 worth of one time projects to use for the Fund Balance which is considered like a surplus. They only want to use that for one time projects so you don't create holes. Mr. Connolly stated that they have substantial roofing work to do at Noble Middle School. They also have to do some repaving to do at the High School that they don't want to do in one shot because it would be a million dollar cost for that project. He stated that there is a projected increase of \$681,640 which is 3.40%. There is nothing about the current economic situation that is going on nationally and regionally that did not leave its mark on the School Board when they were going through the processes. He is here to discuss the things that the Board felt that they had to put into the budget and support in order to help the District move forward.

Mr. Connolly stated that one of the things people might question is if they have added some positions. He said that we will hear him say repeatedly half Special Ed half Regular Ed or Ed Tech half and half. This is because these people are in behavioral programs. Maine has a distinction that we do not want which is that 1 in 5 students qualify for a mental illness diagnosis. Of that 1 in 5, 38% of them are in the higher range of mental illness. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked if he was talking about something like ADD. Mr. Connolly said that depression is a major piece of it including bipolar and schizophrenia. They also have significant Autistic Spectrum Disorder. He said that 4 years ago they added new ASD programs at the primary levels. They added another 2 years ago. This year, they did not add one to the budget, but they are on the cusp depending on what does or doesn't happen this summer. They are hoping that they don't have to add to that number. He said that they need to have an 11 to 2 ratio. They need a qualified teacher and an educational technician.

Mr. Connolly stated that the 7<sup>th</sup> grade leaving to go to 8<sup>th</sup> grade is one of the largest that they have had in a number of years. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade is in the situation of needing another team. The High School is not built for typical classrooms of 25 or 26 students. You cannot fit those bodies in those spaces and have room to skirt the outsides. He stated that there is an 8<sup>th</sup> grade Math and Science that will be added. He said that they can put together the Social Studies and English Language Arts with existing staff by reducing some of the electives. They added a World Language program in fiscal 2020 but did not have funds in the budget for it so that has been added moving forward. Lebanon Elementary Schools is going to need an additional teacher for next year. Lebanon will have a half and half at the 4/5 level regarding the behavioral health programming.

Mr. Connolly stated that they saw a reduction in the Federal Title Funds formerly Title 1A. We are not receiving those funds this year, so we have a Grade 2 teacher who used to be in Title 1 and now has to be paid through the District. Chairman Cowan asked why this was happening. Mr. Connolly stated that the Secretary of Education feels private schools should qualify for certain amounts of dollars. We have lost our Title 1A, some of our Title 2 and some of our Title 5 funds. Mr. Connolly stated that 3 of the elementary schools will be picking up a half Special Ed and a half Regular Ed intervention person that will be dealing with significant behaviors so that the person can work with any student. Dwayne asked if these are teacher or ed tech positions. Mr. Connolly stated that there are 2 categories. They have Teacher levels and Ed Tech II levels. At Hussey, it is a Teacher position and at Knowlton it is a Teacher and an Ed Tech position. Dwayne asked if they had their own classroom or if they were along side other teachers. Mr. Connolly said that it is case by case. If the IEP team decides that a student needs significant placement beyond the regular classroom than they do other accommodations. It all depends on the restrictive issues and what works best for the student.

Mr. Connolly stated that the Mary Hurd Academy is adding in 6 seats next year for other districts to send their students to our school. The tuition for that is \$29,500 and helps to offset and drive down our costs. They cannot use the program as a money maker, but you can use it to offset costs. One of the things that they need to do to continue to have Mary Hurd Academy qualify is to have Andrew Elwell and Spenser Libby be qualified as teaching principals. They both have their certifications now and are qualified for this. Last year, they were 50/50 on the Teacher contract and 50/50 on the Admin contract. This year we need to list them as Administrators who also teach so we can continue to be qualified. They are also increasing a PT technical education at the school.

At Transportation, they need 1 Special Education driver and 2 Regular Education drivers. They also need a flex driver. A flex driver is someone that knows all of the routes and can fill in for any driver that does not show up. Mr. Connolly said that they are having a hard time filling the full complement of bus drivers so that is why the hire a driver as the flex role. Because of the need with some of our Special Education cases they also need 2 bus monitors. They keep track of the number of seizures that a student has, watch for certain ticks and provide the student with a suppository if necessary.

Mr. Connolly stated that they implemented the Eureka Math at North Berwick Elementary 2 years ago to pilot. They brought it in to the full District this year as well as the Illustrated Math at the Middle School. They do not have a K-5 Coach so that is one position that is being added. There will also be an Assistant Director of Facilities added because with the SRRF and all of the other work they are doing, they are continuing all of the work leading up to the referendum. They are working on the test sites now on the major construction projects and have the Building Committee up and running. There is a Coordinator position for the School Health that was held by Erin Dickson for a number of years. She was previously Title 5 funded, but we no longer have that funding.

Chairman Cowan asked what the percentage of identified students were within the District. Mr. Connolly said that, State wide it is 17.5% and we are currently at 18.6%. This amounts to 520 students that have this classification and is a substantial number. Dwayne asked if they have found that the number has been growing. Mr. Connolly said that it has. He said that there is a program called Child Development Services that is for 3 and 4 year olds that takes place before the kids get to school and start some of the services early. Sometimes it is just Speech and Language or Occupational Therapy. He said that their numbers went from 16 one year, 18 another year 22 and another year to 40 students 2 years ago. This year the number is 20 students. This is happening everywhere. The overwhelming students that are coming to us in ASD cases are not coming with Speech and Language issues. About 70% of that group will come to us needing one on one educational technicians as well as a bus monitor.

Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked why the more severe cases coming to public school instead of some sort of mental health center. Mr. Connolly stated that somewhere within the past 20 years, it was decided that the funds needed to come from someplace to provide these services. Would it come from the Federal Government, the State Coffer or should it come from the local budgets? It was decided that they split the cost. They have the schools pay a good portion of the funding. They would have local entitlement which is what the local system gets from the Federal government and then the State kicks in a little bit. It is primarily paid by the Federal and the local governments.

Selectman Hall asked if the teacher contract negotiations were in mediation. Mr. Connolly stated that it is not in mediation anymore. It passed and has a 0% raise for steps 0 through 17 but they still get their step. For the people that are at step 18 at the top of the scale and have no more steps to go, will get a one time \$600 payment.

Mr. Connolly stated that he wanted to go over the Technology portion because of the amount. There are 4 parts that add up to slightly under \$500,000. Under the Technology leases under Article 5, there is a lease for \$286,375. It is #60 and is for Grades 4-6 under the Maine Laptop Technology Initiative. He stated that, 4 budgets ago, the State made a decision that their 4 year cycles for technology would now be an automatic 3 year refresh. This means that, in the 4<sup>th</sup> year, no school would be getting any of the MLTI lease money that they were accustomed to receiving. That MLTI lease for \$286,375 that is noted in the 19/20 School Budget is not going to be received in the 20/21 School Budget. Mr. Connolly stated that under the section Equipment, it shows at total of \$7,760 under the 19/20 budget but it is going to \$476,840 for the 20/21

budget. He stated that half of that is the \$286,375 amount. We still have the technology that we continue to pay for. However, we are paying for it this year instead of the State paying for it.

Selectman Hall stated that he thought he heard the Governor say the other day that the State would be funding any student that needs it for next year. Mr. Connolly said that if a student lives in a home that does not have Wi-Fi capability, E-rate will pick up the cost of that to wire the home or a school can opt for hot spots if you can get a hold of those. He said that they have 40 hot spots out, but they still have 22 students in our District that don't have 1 to 1 daily access. They have roaming hot spots like the Bookmobile that goes from town to town and students can use it there. If they do not have access to technology and the home infrastructure, the State will pick up the tab.

Mr. Connolly stated that \$85,741 is not listed under Article 5. This is a MLTI lease that is a grant. We do not pay that lease. We are not receiving that \$85,741 this year. We also have an amount of \$66,000 that is for additional hardware, library circulation stations, adaptor for teachers, one school needs phone system redone, 5 packs of access points, switches, AC power wall mounts and 48 patch panels. They also need a new server that costs about \$12,000 and Macbooks for Special Education Case Managers and for specialized instruction for the PEC program is \$33,000.

Mr. Connolly stated that there is also an amount of \$55,200. This is because the devices that we are buying are more expensive. In 2017, a student device was \$251 and those devices were adequate. They are not adequate anymore. We are buying more ruggedized devices now. These costs \$424 and have more capability. We are buying these for grades 5 and 9. The current staff devices were at a cost of \$400 but is now costing us \$624. The cost per seat in Technology was \$182 but due to the increase in the cost of the equipment it is now \$200 per seat. It has gone up \$18 per seat over the past 3 years. Selectman Hall asked why Special Education needed Macbooks. Mr. Connolly said that if they are a case manager, the testing and the State programs that are being used operate on that system. He is not sure what the reason for that is.

Mr. Connolly that they are working on getting out of leases. They are buying and will run a 6 year life span instead of leasing, paying the interest and avoiding things like the State changing the cycle from 4 years to a 3 year cycle. They are trying to get into something that is steadier. Chairman Cowan asked why the decision to change the lease cycle from 4 years to 3 years. Mr. Connolly stated that, 4 years ago, there was a lot of dissention saying that it is the Maine Laptop Technology Initiative and not the Apple devices. A lot of schools were saying that they wanted to get away from those laptops. He stated that replacing a screen on one of those laptops was \$800 and the cost for the whole Chromebook is \$424. Parents would not like to see a bill for a screen at that cost. In the original MLTI with the State they had this thing called an AEV (Alternative Educational Value). It said that if you can find something better and you can prove to the State that it is better, than you can go with it. People stated that this wouldn't happen because the State puts so much money into training and they do MLTI training, not Chrome training. Chris Russo and one other technology coordinator from Southern Maine wrote an AEV to see what would happen. The State denied the AEV. They went back about 6 years ago and told the State that they can't give them a reason to not be able to do it because the Chromebooks meet all of the requirements. The only thing it couldn't do was run Vernier work in the Science

lab. There is a Macbook station there so the students can use that one. The State finally agreed to let us do that. Other schools wondered how we were able to do it. The State then went back and rewrote the MLTI lease and took out the AEV so districts could not convert their MLTI dollars to help them purchase products besides Apple. This brought on a lot of dissention and 4 years ago, the then Governor said that they would not fund any of it. They would refresh by taking everything back that the schools had, sell it off, give the schools devices but they need to be paid in 3 years instead of 4 years.

Mr. Connolly stated that they are replacing some of the lunch tables in the cafeteria and new furniture at the Hurd School. The Contingency Funds stayed about the same. Mr. Connolly stated that every time there is an audit you are given some advice. Their auditors stated that the activity fees should come from different places than where we had them. For example, if you look at Article 4 for Other Instruction the Activity fee for this year of \$68,950 is under the Office of the Principal and the Principal or Office Administrator would over see these funds. The auditors recommended that they move that to Regular Instruction and that it would all go through Denise Vancampen for her to oversee.

Under Article 8 for Transportation, the section for Temporary/Summer Employees is down \$23,197. This is because they have had issues with finding people. He said that this year might be different, but they didn't go back and change the figures. Mr. Connolly stated that School Districts are allowed to carry a 3% Fund Balance which is about \$1.2 million for us. Usually, at the end of the year, if they are looking for a projection in May and say that we think we are going to be good at an amount of \$1.6 million. We can take about \$200,000 of that and get some of the one time projects done like a roof or paving. They will take care of some of these projects. He stated that, this year, the approval from the Governor's office is that they are waiving the 3% of how much you can hold. He said that if the voters say you can spend \$42 million and you spend \$42,000,070.00 which you can't spend. If you do and your audit tells you that in October, you are upside down \$70 even though you have surplus. You cannot overspend on what the voters approved. Mr. Connolly stated that they can keep more than 3% but it doesn't do you any good if you can't spend it. There has been a waiver implemented for next year to be able to use the funds if you have overspent to make up for the short fall.

#### **4. Unfinished Business:**

##### **A. Budget FY21: Discuss Budget for FY21, Town Meeting Discussions**

Dwayne stated that he got the numbers from Pratt in today. He said that if everything was equal which means that we didn't change any valuations and if all of the budgets for School, Town and County pass, our tax rate would drop \$.20. He said that Pratt bought \$80 million in equipment. We gained \$9 million in new property value and when you throw in the Homestead Exemption loss of about \$675,000, it leaves us with a net of about \$8.5 million. Dwayne stated that even though Pratt bought \$80 million worth of product it actually translates to about \$33 million. That translates to us at about \$22 million. The total value that we gain with everything is about \$35 million. This is before we do our valuation adjustments.

Dwayne stated that the average home in town is about \$300,000 and last year you would have paid \$3,458 in taxes. All things being equal, you would pay \$3341.25 this year for a decrease of \$116.75. This is with increases in all of the budgets and without the valuation increase. With increase in valuation, we will drop our mil rate even further. Originally, they were looking at a 10% increase which would come out to about a 7% increase when everything is equaled out. They are now looking at a 12% valuation increase which would equal a full 10% increase in valuation. Dwayne stated that the mil rate would most probably go from \$12.35 to \$11.75. However, the valuation will go up, but he believes that about 95% of the town will see a tax decrease no matter what we do.

Dwayne stated that if they hit the 10% mark for valuation, then they can hopefully skip a year or so before we do it again. They hoped that this would happen last year, but it didn't. Last year, they did the 10% increase which came out to about a 6% increase. However, the market went up 7% so we lost 1%. The market is hovering at 6% right now so if we shoot for 10%, it will give us a buffer and it will bring us to 96% of State valuations.

Selectman Hall asked what a \$11.75 mil rate would give us for an overlay. Dwayne said that that was completely different from the valuations. However, he said that we have always tried to have about 2.5% in overlay, but we should probably be more around the 3% range which puts us in the \$300,000 mark. The reason for this is because the School Budget continues to increase and the slowdown in the economy. The last time we saw a slow down in the economy, we saw a 3% increase in late taxes. We eventually get the taxes, but it takes us 4 years to get them. Unfortunately, the School is not going to wait 4 years to get their check. By having a 3% overlay, this will help to cover any impact in cash flow.

Dwayne stated that the County Budget increased by about \$15,000.

**B. GWRLT: Discussion on Negutaquet Conservation Area Parking Lot**

Dwayne showed the Selectmen a plan for what the parking lot will look like. He is just waiting to hear from them on when the work needs to be done so he can coordinate it so our guys can be available.

The guys are currently working on small projects. He will wait for the summer to work on Dennett Road. They are also doing a lot of tree cutting right now. The goal this summer, once the budget passes, is to complete Dennett Road, Dillingham Road and Beech Ridge Road by the fall. The Linscott Road project will have to be done next spring.

Dwayne stated that GWRLT have also started to do the bridge on the trail. They just bought the rocks that go on either side. They are picking up the steel beams this weekend and will start working on that soon. Hopefully, it will be done by the fall and we can connect the 2 properties.

**C. Assessing:** Review State Assessment Results, Discuss Value Adjustments for FY21

Dwayne stated that they are about 99% done on all of the new values and Craig has almost all of the tables done. To get the land tables to 10% increase, we had to increase it by 12% because of depreciation, land area and acreage. For the buildings, he is figuring it out so those can be up to 10% as well. He hopes to have some draft numbers by the end of this month.

**D. COVID-19:** Town Reopening Plan

Dwayne stated that our reopening has gone pretty smooth. One of the things that they need to discuss is regarding what to do with the Community Center. He had Kristie put together a proposal on some possible things to do for the Community Center. By following the CDC guidelines, we could not rent the Center for more than 15 people based on the size of the facility. Dwayne does not believe that anyone would pay \$150 for the rental plus the cleaning costs for disinfecting it after their event for just 15 people. Dwayne believes that they should probably not bother renting the Community Center out for the summer. Selectman Galemme asked how much revenue we would be losing. Dwayne said that it would be about \$2,000. The Board agreed that they should not rent it out for the summer.

Dwayne stated that the playgrounds will be open effective tomorrow, June 1<sup>st</sup>. We will not be sanitizing them, so they have put up signs to let people know that they are playing at their own risk.

Because there is no summer camp this year, Kristie came up with some ideas for virtual contests for the kids. The activities are designed to get the kids engaged with the hope that, as the summer goes on, maybe some of those virtual activities can be turned into some small group activities. Selectman Hall stated that he likes the Virtual Community Member Interviews. She will do some tutorial videos, virtual field trips and other contest ideas. She will start organizing and putting it out there tomorrow.

Dwayne said that the Board had voted to have in person meetings beginning June 1 and he wants to make sure that this is still the plan for the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board. He has had one Planning Board member express some dissatisfaction to the in person meetings. He told them that the ZOOM meetings are kind of skirting around the law. It's a way to deal with the pandemic but it is actually a violation of the law. He said that our attorney said to do it because the plan is to come back to in person meetings anyway. He understands that some people have health issues and are not going to want to do it. He told the person that they are not forced to come in

Dwayne said that the Planning Board is a little different from the Selectmen's meeting because they are looking at a lot of things like massive plans. It is hard to do that through a ZOOM meeting. Dwayne would just like some clear direction on how the Selectmen want to meet in the future and if they want to allow the Planning Board to meet in person or through ZOOM. Chairman Cowan admits that she would have preferred to do the ZOOM meetings until things settle down more. Selectman Hall said that he is fine with in person meetings as long as people

are respectful of others and wear masks. Dwayne said that he does have masks for people to take and wear. The Selectmen were okay with meeting in person.

**Reminders: Next Board of Selectmen's Meeting** – June 16, 2020 – 6:30 pm  
**Town Meeting Public Hearing** – June 23, 2020 – 6:30 pm Zoom Meeting

**5. New Business:**

**B. Excise Tax:** Establish Deadline for Registering Cars per Governor's Executive Order

Dwayne stated that they set the deadline date for people to register their cars that couldn't do it the past few months. The date that was set was June 30, 2020 to give people enough time. The postcards went out last week. He will be sending the newsletter out by the end of next week and they have put out the Town Report so people can pick them up at the Transfer Station or at the Town Office.

**6. Other Business:**

There was no other business at this time.

**7. Review and Approve Warrants and Correspondence:**

Warrant:	May 26, 2020	- \$	0.00
Warrant:	June 2, 2020	- \$	100,162.77

Selectman Galemmo motioned to approve the Warrant of June 2, 2020 for the amount of \$100,162.77. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

**8. Adjournment:**

Selectman Glemmo motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 pm. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Respectively Submitted,  
Susan Niehoff, Stenographer

Original to Town Clerk

Chairman: Wendy Cowan

Selectman: Jonathan Hall

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Jr.

Selectman: Charles Glemmo

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Sr.

